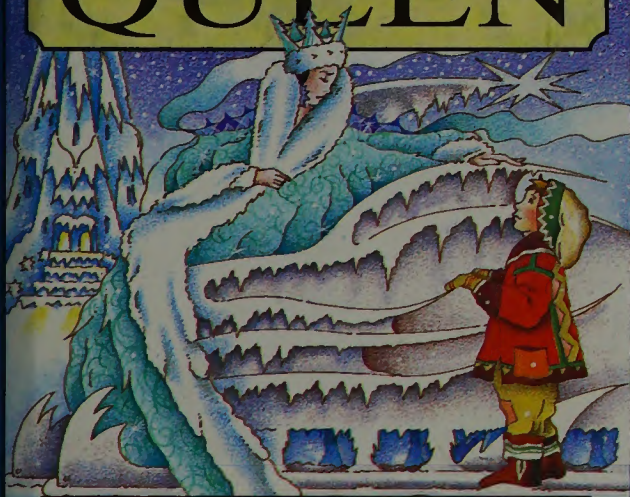


MINI CLASSICS
THE
SNOW
QUEEN



ILLUSTRATED BY ROGER LANGTON

MINI CLASSICS
THE
SNOW
QUEEN

RETOLD BY STEPHANIE LASLETT
ILLUSTRATED BY ROGER LANGTON

|| •PARRAGON• ||

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There was once a dreadfully wicked hobgoblin. One day he was in high spirits because he had made a magic mirror. It reflected everything that was good and beautiful in such a way that it grew smaller and smaller, but anything that was bad and ugly stood out very clearly and looked much worse. The most beautiful countryside looked like boiled spinach and the prettiest face looked quite gruesome.



Now one day he flew high into the sky with his magic mirror for he wished to catch the reflection of the angels. But as he drew nearer to heaven the mirror began to shake in his hands and all of a sudden it twisted from his grasp and fell back down to earth. There it broke into a million billion pieces, each smaller than a grain of sand, and they were blown all over the world. To the hobgoblin's great glee, some specks landed in people's eyes and then they could only see things in a bad and twisted way.

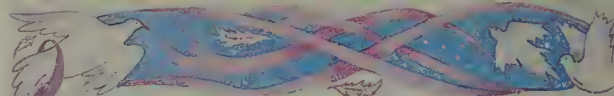
Indeed, some tiny splinters of glass even landed in people's hearts and that was really quite dreadful, for then the heart began to turn into a lump of cold, hard ice.

But the wicked hobgoblin thought this was the funniest thing he had ever seen and he laughed till his sides ached.

Now we will hear what happened next.

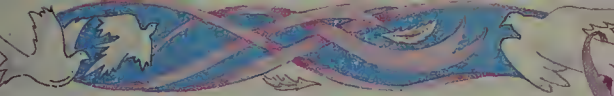






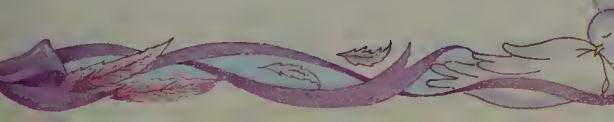
Far away in the big city, the houses were all so cramped and crowded together that there was no space for gardens for the children to play in. Here lived a little boy called Kai and a little girl called Gerda. They lived next door to one another and because they had no gardens outside their houses, their parents had made a tiny roof garden for them to play in just where the two attic roofs sloped down and joined together.

Here they had planted sweet herbs and flowers, and best of



all, two beautiful rose trees,
one either side of the little
gully which ran between the
roofs. The tops of the green
branches gently twisted around
one another until they made a
fragrant bower joining the two
houses together and here sat
Kai and Gerda all summer
long, playing their games and
dreaming their dreams.

In the winter, when it was too
cold to sit outside, the children
pressed hot pennies against
their frozen attic windows and
then they could wave at one
another across the roofs.





One winter's day the snow fell heavily outside the frosty windows.

"The white bees are swarming," said Kai's old grandmother.

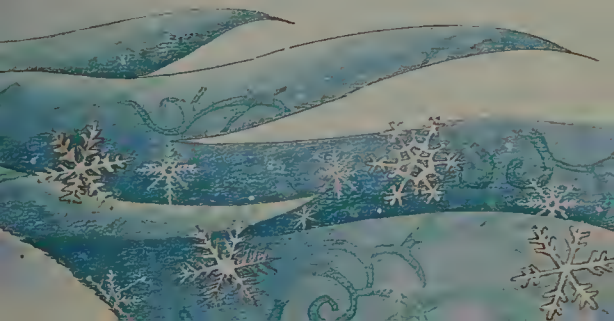
"Do they have a Queen Bee like real bees, grandmother?" asked Kai.

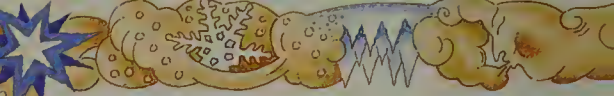
"Of course they do," the old lady replied. "She flies where the snow falls thickest and at night, when everyone is fast asleep, she comes peeking in at the windows and leaves a pattern of frost on the glass."

"I've seen that!" cried Kai, "but if she tries to come in here I shall put her on the stove and melt her!"



That evening as Kai was getting ready for bed, he knelt on his window seat and looked outside. The snowflakes swirled by and one of them, the largest of all, landed on his windowbox. It grew larger and larger till it took the shape of a lady. She was very beautiful, but looked as cold and as hard as ice.



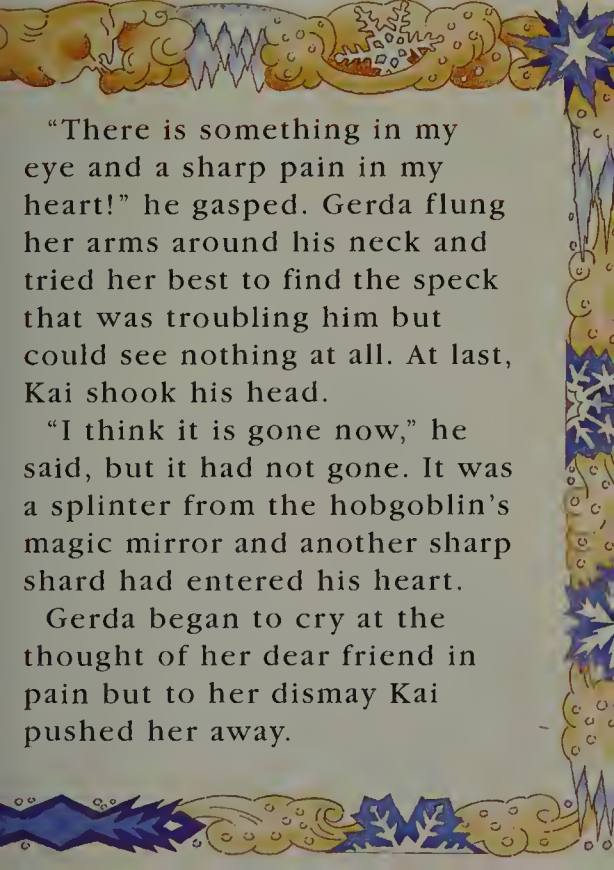


The lady slowly turned to look at him with glittering eyes and she beckoned with a graceful white hand. Kai jumped back in terror and a shadow like a great white bird passed by outside the window.

That night the frost lay thicker than ever before but as the days passed, the air grew warmer and soon spring had arrived, and then summer.

One day Kai and Gerda sat under their rose bower, looking at picture books and enjoying the bright sunshine. Suddenly Kai cried out in pain.





“There is something in my eye and a sharp pain in my heart!” he gasped. Gerda flung her arms around his neck and tried her best to find the speck that was troubling him but could see nothing at all. At last, Kai shook his head.

“I think it is gone now,” he said, but it had not gone. It was a splinter from the hobgoblin’s magic mirror and another sharp shard had entered his heart.

Gerda began to cry at the thought of her dear friend in pain but to her dismay Kai pushed her away.

“Why are you crying?” he asked.
“It makes you look so ugly. And
look at these worm-eaten roses.
How horrid they are!” Slowly
Kai began to pull the petals off
the flowers one by one.

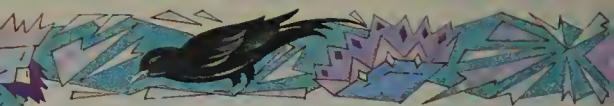


“Kai, what are you doing?” cried Gerda, much afraid to see the change in him. But Kai didn’t reply. He just pulled another rose from the tree and ran back inside his house.



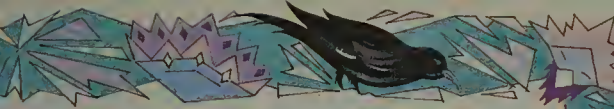
After that Kai would no longer play with Gerda. He made fun of her picture books and the games they used to play in their rose-filled roof garden. When his grandmother rocked by the fire and told tales of long ago, Kai would run from the room with his hands over his ears and his face twisted with bad temper. The only thing that interested him now were the snowflakes that fell in the winter and then he would sit by the window and gaze at them for hours for he thought they were more beautiful than flowers.





One winter's day Kai decided to take his sledge to the market square and join in the other boys' games. They loved to tie their small sleighs to the back of the farmers' carts and have a free ride out of town, slipping over the glistening snow. But today there was a visitor in town. A large white sleigh was just about to leave the square so Kai quickly hitched his sledge behind it. With a flick of the reins, the horses were off and soon Kai was passing through the town gates. Faster and faster went the





horses and Kai grew afraid, but he did not dare lean forward and untie the knot for they were going too fast. Loudly he called out to the driver to stop but his voice was carried away on the icy wind. Soon his hands were numb with cold and at every turn he feared that he might lose his grip and fall.

On they sped over the gleaming ice and the snowflakes grew larger and larger till they looked like great white birds flying about his head. All of a sudden the sledge slowed down and stopped.





Then the driver stood up and turned around to face Kai. It was a lady, tall and beautiful with glittering eyes. It was the Snow Queen!

“We have come a long way,” she said, “but there is further still to go. You look almost frozen. Climb under my cloak and I will take care of you.”

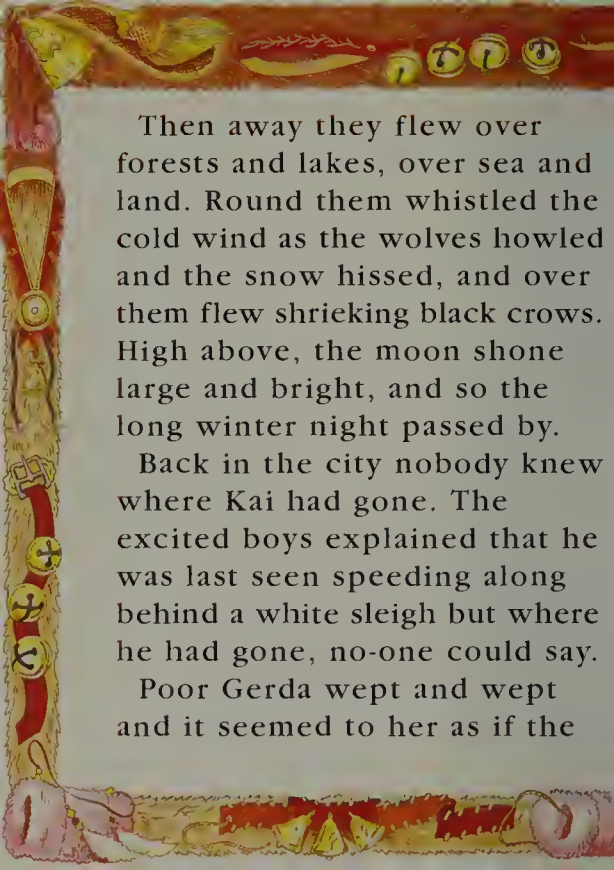




With chattering teeth, poor Kai crept aboard the large white sleigh and under the Snow Queen's cape and there he sat, numb with cold. He felt as though he were sinking into a deep snow drift.

Gently the Snow Queen kissed him on the forehead and his heart felt as heavy as ice. Then she kissed him again and he forgot all about little Gerda, his grandmother and everyone at home.

"Now I must not kiss you any more," she said, "or else I should kiss you to death."



Then away they flew over forests and lakes, over sea and land. Round them whistled the cold wind as the wolves howled and the snow hissed, and over them flew shrieking black crows. High above, the moon shone large and bright, and so the long winter night passed by.

Back in the city nobody knew where Kai had gone. The excited boys explained that he was last seen speeding along behind a white sleigh but where he had gone, no-one could say.

Poor Gerda wept and wept and it seemed to her as if the



winter would never end.

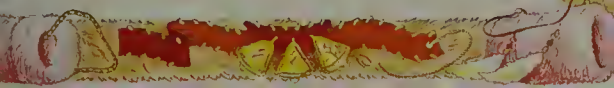
Then the air grew warmer and spring arrived at last.

“I must find Kai,” she decided and she wandered out through the town gates and came at last to the river. Sadly she stared at the fast-flowing water.

“My Kai must surely be dead,” she sighed, but the swallows sang in reply:

“It is not so, it is not so.” But Gerda sighed again and said:

“My Kai must surely be dead,” and this time the sunbeams playing about her head whispered: “It is not so, it is not so.”



Then Gerda noticed a little boat moored by the bank.

“Perhaps it could take me to Kai,” she thought and she carefully stepped aboard and sat down. Slowly the boat drifted away from the bank and was soon carrying her steadily downriver.





Gerda sat perfectly still as the little boat floated between the green banks on either side of the river. Tall trees and lush meadows filled with bright nodding flowers passed by till at last she reached a large cherry orchard, and there stood a little cottage with red and blue windows and a straw roof. The boat slowly drew up to the bank and Gerda saw an old woman hobbling out of the cottage. She wore a sunhat painted with flowers and she carried a gnarled old walking stick.

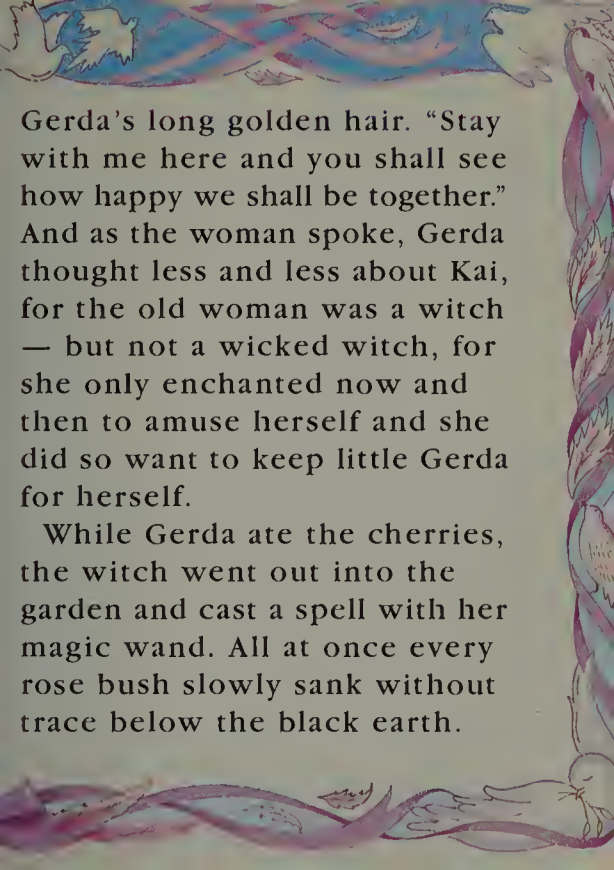




“You poor little girl!” cried the old woman. “Come, let me help you climb ashore. Where are you from and why are you here?” Then Gerda told the woman her story and asked if she might have seen Kai pass by. But the old woman just shook her head and led poor Gerda inside the little house. On the table was a bowl full of the most delicious cherries and the old woman let Gerda eat as many as she liked.

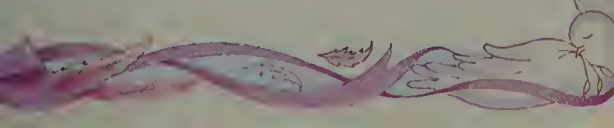
“I have always longed to have a dear little girl just like you,” said the witch as she combed





Gerda's long golden hair. "Stay with me here and you shall see how happy we shall be together." And as the woman spoke, Gerda thought less and less about Kai, for the old woman was a witch — but not a wicked witch, for she only enchanted now and then to amuse herself and she did so want to keep little Gerda for herself.

While Gerda ate the cherries, the witch went out into the garden and cast a spell with her magic wand. All at once every rose bush slowly sank without trace below the black earth.



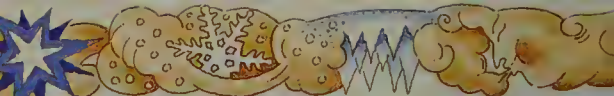
The old woman was afraid that if Gerda saw the roses it would remind her of her beloved Kai and then she might want to run away.





The next day the old woman led Gerda out into the garden and the little girl jumped for joy at the sight of so many beautiful flowers and plants. She ran down the path and explored every corner and not once did she think about Kai. At night Gerda lay upon red silk pillows filled with sweet purple violets and she slept as soundly as a queen. So the days passed and Gerda spent all her time playing in the garden. It seemed to her as if something was missing but she couldn't quite remember what it was.





One day Gerda looked closely at the old woman's sunhat and there painted on the brim amongst all the other flowers was a red rose. Then Gerda knew what it was that was missing.

"Why, there are no roses here!" she cried. She hunted through all the flowers and bushes in the garden but at last gave up, for there was not one rose to be found. Then Gerda sat and cried and her warm tears fell on the spot where a rosebush once grew. Straightaway the bush came up in full bloom right before her eyes. Gerda





kissed the soft petals and as she breathed in their sweet perfume, she remembered Kai.

“What have I been doing here?” she cried. “I must look for Kai,” and with that she ran from the garden in her little bare feet.

On and on she ran until she was sure the old woman could not follow her. Then she sank down upon a stone to rest. When she looked about her she saw that the summer was over and that outside the witch’s magic garden the leaves had turned orange and brown and autumn had arrived.



“How much time I have wasted,” sobbed Gerda as she began to run over the icy ground. The air grew colder and soon there was snow underfoot and her feet were tired and sore.



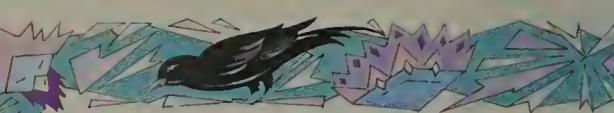




Suddenly, with a great whoosh and flurry of wings, a big black crow flew down beside her.

“Caw, caw!” he croaked. “Where are you going?” Then Gerda once again explained her story and her hunt for the missing Kai.

“I think I know where you might find your missing friend,” said the crow and Gerda clapped her hands excitedly. “My wife and I work at the King’s palace nearby. Recently a young man arrived from who knows where.”



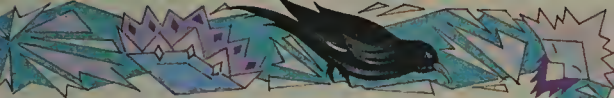
"That must be Kai!" cried Gerda joyfully. "He has travelled a long way."

"Possibly," said the crow slowly, "but if it is indeed him, then he has quite forgotten you for the Princess."

"Who is this Princess?" cried Gerda, and so the crow began.

"The King has a daughter, a very clever Princess, who one day decided she would like to get married. But she wanted a husband who was as clever as she was and so the newspaper announced that any man in the kingdom who wished to woo





the Princess should call at the palace and try his luck. Well, what a crowd of jostling fellows there soon was, each of them convinced that they would be able to win her love with their sparkling conversation and fine words. But as each one arrived at the great hall, he was so overcome by the magnificence of his surroundings that he became quite tongue-tied. Until one day, a young fellow arrived at the palace with long curling hair and bright, eager eyes.”

“That’s Kai! I’m sure that’s Kai!” cried Gerda.



“He was poorly dressed,” added the crow, “but this young fellow strode up the hall as bold as you please, quite ignoring all the Lords and Ladies-in-Waiting looking down their noses at him, and he spoke to the Princess just as easily as I am talking to you now and soon she had quite fallen in love and so they were married.”

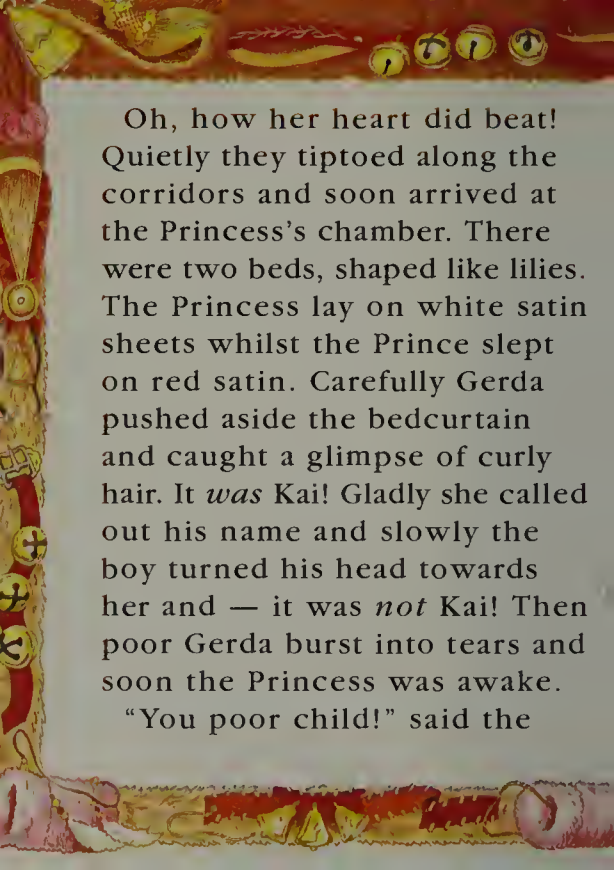
“Married!” gasped Gerda. “You must take me to the palace straightaway.” The crow led her up a high mountain to the magnificent palace perched high on a rocky pinnacle.



With an aching heart, Gerda followed Mr and Mrs Crow to a little wooden door in the palace wall which led to the servants' quarters. From there a narrow flight of stairs took her up to the bedchambers.







Oh, how her heart did beat! Quietly they tiptoed along the corridors and soon arrived at the Princess's chamber. There were two beds, shaped like lilies. The Princess lay on white satin sheets whilst the Prince slept on red satin. Carefully Gerda pushed aside the bedcurtain and caught a glimpse of curly hair. It *was* Kai! Gladly she called out his name and slowly the boy turned his head towards her and — it was *not* Kai! Then poor Gerda burst into tears and soon the Princess was awake.

“You poor child!” said the



Princess and Prince together, when they had heard her sad story. Gently they put her to bed and she fell asleep truly grateful for all the help she had been given that day.

Next day the Prince and Princess dressed Gerda from head to foot in satins and silks and gave her a splendid gold carriage and horses so she might continue her search for Kai. Then Gerda waved goodbye and the crow flew along beside her as far as he could until the coach disappeared from sight into a dark wood.



Then the sun began to sink below the horizon and the gold coach blazed in the dying rays of light. A band of robbers saw the dazzling light and in a trice were upon the coach, crying "Gold! Gold!" They seized the horses and coachmen and dragged poor Gerda from the carriage.

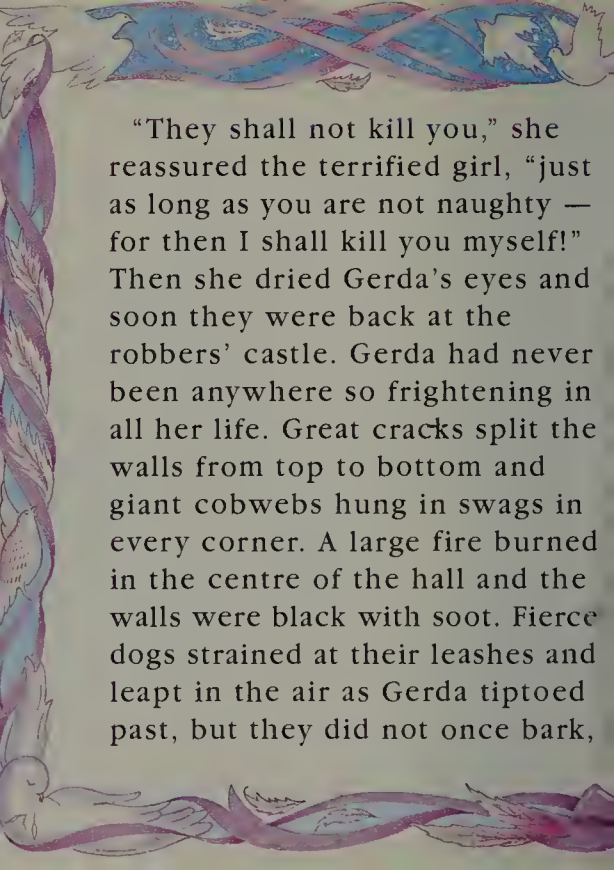




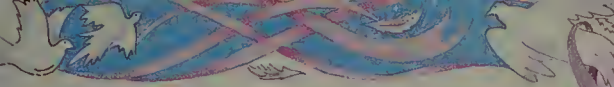


The robber gang was led by an old woman who pinched Gerda's arm with her thumb and forefinger. "She is plump and tender. She will make me a good supper!" cried the old robber queen and she drew her long knife from her belt.

"No!" wailed the robber queen's daughter. "I want to play with her. I want to wear her silk dress and her soft muff." And because the little robber girl was spoilt and wilful, of course she got her way. With an impish smile, the little robber girl threw her arms round Gerda.



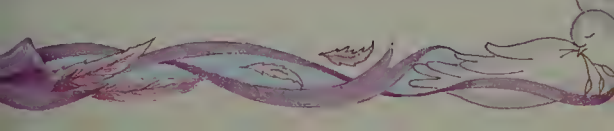
“They shall not kill you,” she reassured the terrified girl, “just as long as you are not naughty — for then I shall kill you myself!” Then she dried Gerda’s eyes and soon they were back at the robbers’ castle. Gerda had never been anywhere so frightening in all her life. Great cracks split the walls from top to bottom and giant cobwebs hung in swags in every corner. A large fire burned in the centre of the hall and the walls were black with soot. Fierce dogs strained at their leashes and leapt in the air as Gerda tiptoed past, but they did not once bark,



for barking had been forbidden.

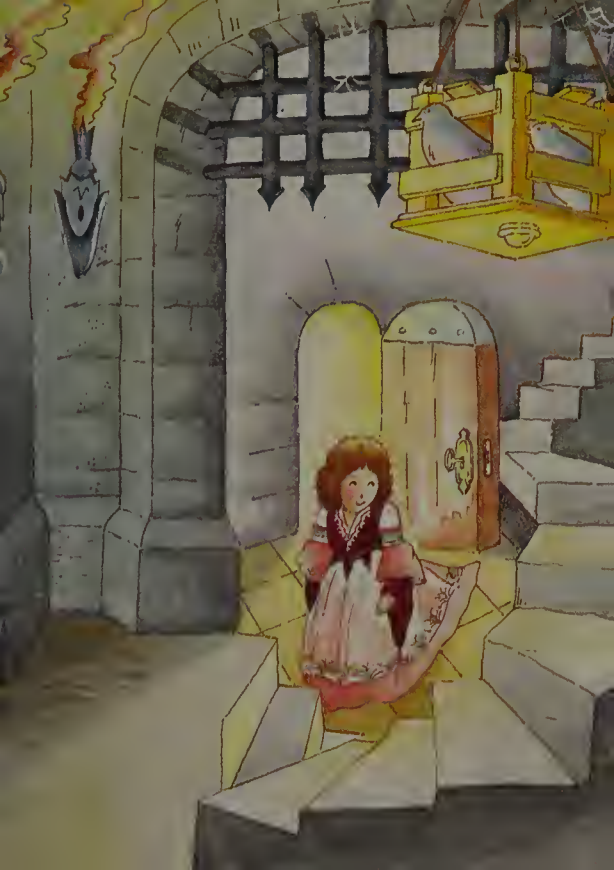
“You shall sleep with me tonight,” ordered the robber girl and she pushed Gerda onto a dirty straw mattress on the cobbled floor. Overhead hung a cage holding two sad little woodpigeons and nearby was tethered a sorry-looking reindeer. The robber girl slept with her knife by her side but poor Gerda stayed wide awake all night long. When all was still and quiet, the wood pigeons softly whispered:

“Coo, coo! We have seen little Kai. He was carried away over the snow by the Snow Queen.”



“They passed by our nest in a great white sleigh and as she went by, the Snow Queen breathed on us with her icy breath and all my little ones died. Coo, coo!” Then poor Gerda was much afraid for Kai. “Where was she going?” she asked in a trembling voice.







Quietly the reindeer spoke up.

"They were heading towards Lapland, the land where I was born," he said sadly. "That is a country white with crisp snow and shining with shimmering ice. There the deer run free under a sparkling sun and the air is as sweet as honey." The unhappy reindeer shook his head as he remembered the places from his past.

"The Queen has a summer palace there," he continued, "but her best palace is on the bleak island of Spitzbergen up by the North Pole, many, many miles from here."



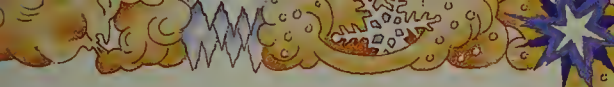
Then Gerda moaned for she feared she would never see her best friend again. Suddenly the robber girl woke up.

“Lie still,” she ordered, “or I shall tickle you with my knife!”

But when Gerda told the little robber girl her sorry tale the quick-tempered girl agreed to help.

“This afternoon all the menfolk will be out robbing and there will be no-one left here but me and my mother. She always has a nap in the afternoon so we needn’t worry about her. When all is quiet I can set you free and the reindeer will carry you to where



A decorative border at the top of the page featuring stylized clouds in shades of yellow and orange, and a large blue star with white rays on the right side.

you need to go.”

Gerda could hardly believe her ears but sure enough, that afternoon when all was still, the robber girl was as good as her word and silently untied the reindeer. “You surely know the way,” she whispered, and the delighted reindeer nodded his head quickly in reply. Then the girl lifted Gerda on top of the huge animal and tied her securely to the saddle.

“Before you go, you must give me your muff and then I shall give you my mother’s fur gloves so your hands will not freeze.”

A decorative border at the bottom of the page featuring stylized clouds in shades of yellow and orange, and a large blue star with white rays on the right side.

So Gerda handed over her muff and the robber girl gave her the fur gloves and two loaves of bread and some sausages so she wouldn't starve to death. Gerda was so touched by this kindness that she couldn't help but cry.

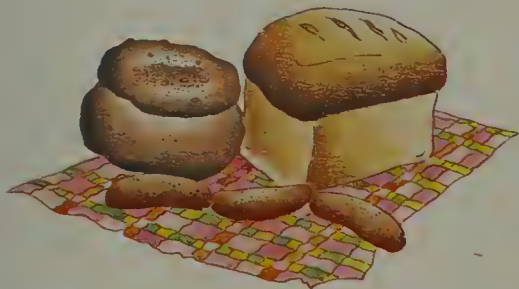






“You can stop that snivelling,” said the little robber girl. “Put a smile on your face — you should be looking happy!” Then she cut the reindeer’s rope and with a high leap he was off and away.

“Run now,” cried the robber girl,
“but take care of the little girl.”
And Gerda stretched out her hand
in its warm fur glove and waved
goodbye as best she could.

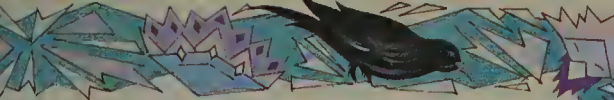




On the reindeer sped, over the ground and through the great forest as wolves howled and ravens screamed. Soon one loaf was eaten, then another, then the sausages and still the reindeer raced onwards as the northern lights lit up the sky overhead.

After a time they came to a poor little house with the roof almost touching the ground and the door so low that you had to bend down to creep inside. There was no-one at home but an old Lapp woman cooking fish over an oil lamp. Poor Gerda was so frozen that she could not speak so the





reindeer recounted his own story and then hers.

The Lapp woman was very moved. "Oh, you poor creatures!" she said. "And you have such a long way still to travel! You must go over a hundred miles into Finland and find the Finnish woman. I will write you a message on a piece of dried cod fish for I have no paper. She will help you as best she can."

So once again Gerda climbed on the reindeer's back and after many hours they reached the Finnish woman's house. It was half buried under snow.



Gerda knocked on the chimney and soon they were safe inside. To their surprise they found this home be as hot as an oven. Gently the Finnish woman helped Gerda out of her fur gloves and boots

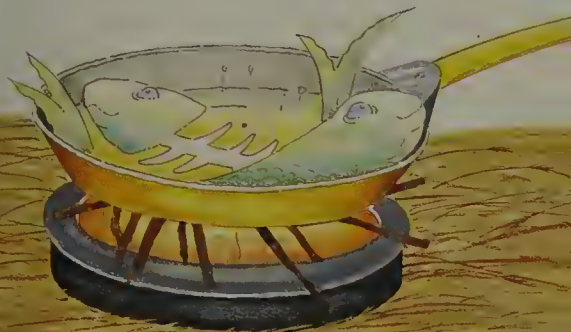


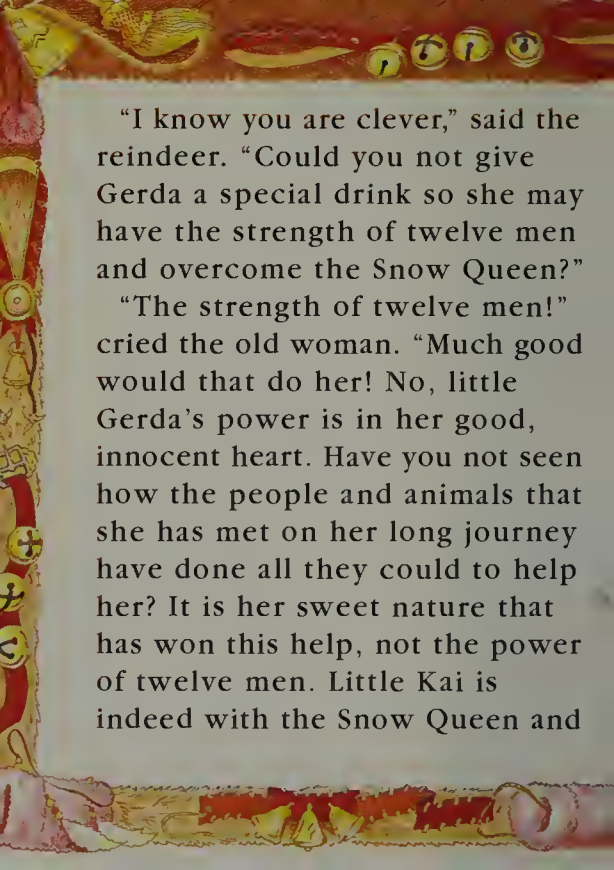
and laid a piece of ice on the reindeer's head. Then she read the message on the fish three times till she knew it by heart, and dropped it in her saucepan for she never wasted a thing.





Then while Gerda slept in a corner of the room, the reindeer snuggled close and told the Finnish woman their story. She blinked her eyes but said nothing.





"I know you are clever," said the reindeer. "Could you not give Gerda a special drink so she may have the strength of twelve men and overcome the Snow Queen?"

"The strength of twelve men!" cried the old woman. "Much good would that do her! No, little Gerda's power is in her good, innocent heart. Have you not seen how the people and animals that she has met on her long journey have done all they could to help her? It is her sweet nature that has won this help, not the power of twelve men. Little Kai is indeed with the Snow Queen and



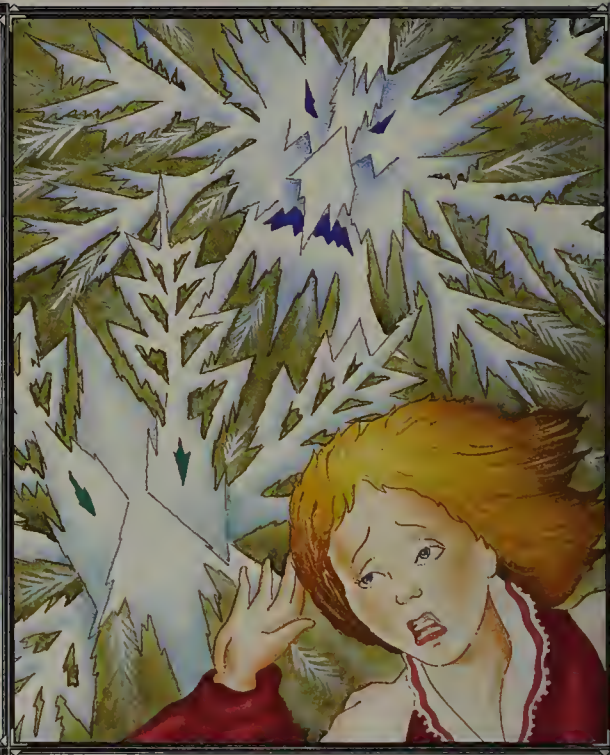
he believes it to be the best place on earth — but that is because he has a glass splinter in his heart and a glass speck in his eye. If they do not come out, he will remain bewitched forever.”

Then the good woman told the reindeer how to find the palace and soon they were on their way once more. They had not gone long when Gerda cried out, “I have left my fur gloves and boots behind!” Her hands and feet felt numb with cold but the reindeer did not dare stop. Over the ice he sped until it seemed as if the very air would freeze.

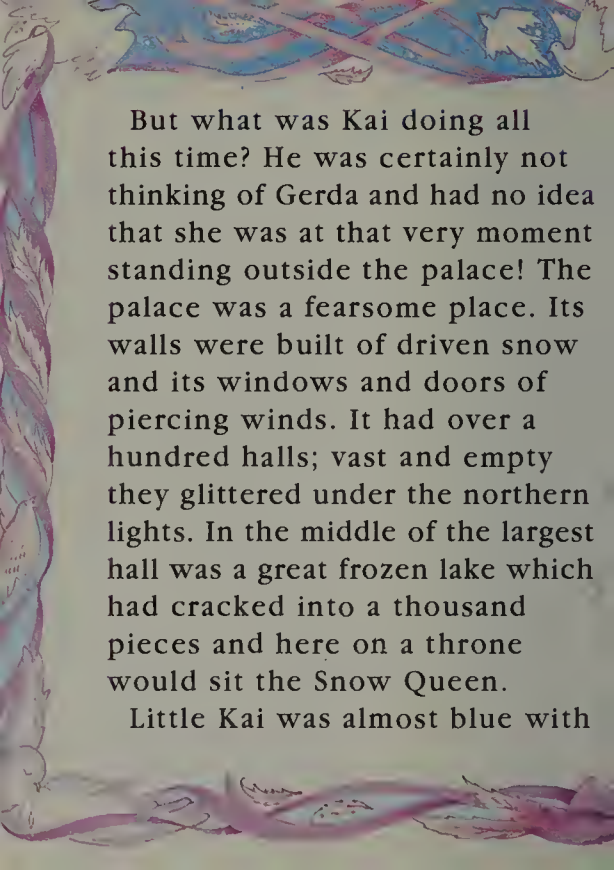


Soon he reached the palace garden and there, with tears trickling down his great furry cheeks, he bade the little girl farewell. So stood Gerda with no shoes and no gloves in all the bitter cold.



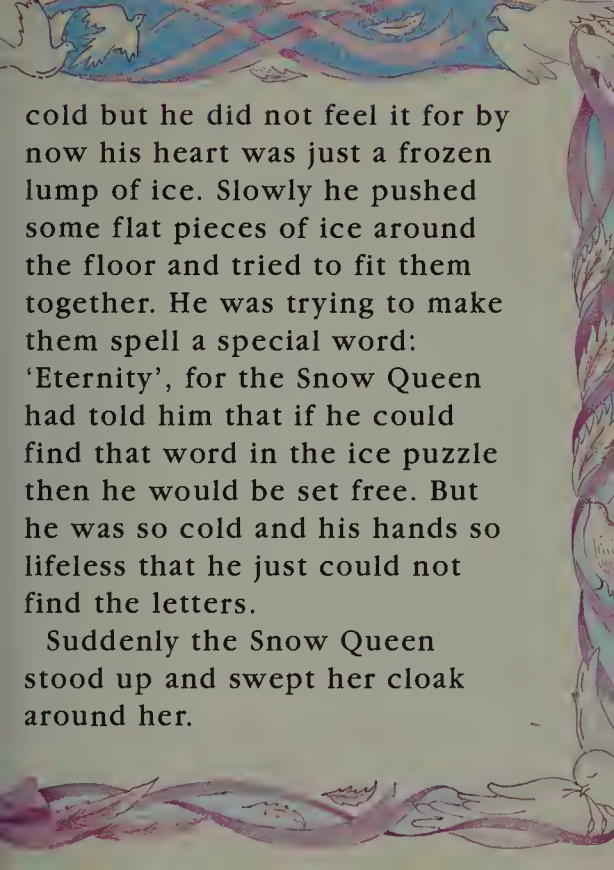


Gerda stared up at the palace towers reaching like giant ice splinters into the sky high above her. Taking a deep breath, she ran as fast as she could towards the ice steps and as she ran monstrous snowflakes swirled about her. They formed strange and horrible shapes and seemed terrifyingly alive. They twisted and coiled about her head and tried to prevent her passage, but Gerda prayed for strength and was relieved to see that even the most terrible snowflake simply melted when it touched her warm body.



But what was Kai doing all this time? He was certainly not thinking of Gerda and had no idea that she was at that very moment standing outside the palace! The palace was a fearsome place. Its walls were built of driven snow and its windows and doors of piercing winds. It had over a hundred halls; vast and empty they glittered under the northern lights. In the middle of the largest hall was a great frozen lake which had cracked into a thousand pieces and here on a throne would sit the Snow Queen.

Little Kai was almost blue with



cold but he did not feel it for by now his heart was just a frozen lump of ice. Slowly he pushed some flat pieces of ice around the floor and tried to fit them together. He was trying to make them spell a special word:

‘Eternity’, for the Snow Queen had told him that if he could find that word in the ice puzzle then he would be set free. But he was so cold and his hands so lifeless that he just could not find the letters.

Suddenly the Snow Queen stood up and swept her cloak around her.

"I am going away," she announced. "It is time for me to travel to warmer countries and give them a dusting of snow and ice. First of all I will fly south and powder my black kettles!" (for that is what she called her two volcanoes, Mount Etna and Mount Vesuvius).

With a great swirl of her cape, she left the hall and mounted her sleigh, and the air hissed as she sped by. Kai continued to stare at his ice puzzle, and he sat so still that he looked quite frozen. And so it was that Gerda found him when she came at last to the Great Hall.



The biting cold winds suddenly died down as she stepped inside and caught sight of Kai.







“Kai, dear Kai!” she cried. “I have found you at last,” and running to him she flung her arms about his neck. But he sat quite stiff and cold and did not seem to know her. The coldness of his body seeped into her own and Gerda wept bitterly. Her warm, loving tears fell on his expressionless face and some trickled into his eyes. Slowly Kai blinked and as he did so the hobgoblin’s glass splinter was washed from his eye and he could see clearly once again.

Then Kai wept too and cried out “Gerda! Dear Gerda! What

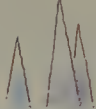




am I doing here? Where have you been for so long?" and as they held each other tight his icy heart thawed and was filled with warm love for his little friend. Shivering, he looked around the ice hall.

"How cold it is here," he said. "How bare and empty!" and together they wept for joy. Even the jigsaw pieces of ice jumped up and danced happily as Gerda and Kai kissed once more and when they laid down again, Kai could see that they had formed a word. 'Eternity' it said. Kai was free to go.





Hand in hand they walked from that great ice palace and wherever they went the icy winds hushed and the sun came out. There in the garden was the reindeer and gladly he carried them first to the Finnish woman and then to the Lapp woman and so they were fed and given warm clothes for their journey home.





On they travelled, heading south, and the air grew warmer and green spears of grass began to peek through the white crust of snow. They came at last to the great forest and the silent trees were bursting into bud.

As they passed by, out from the shadows trotted a brown horse and Gerda recognised it at once. It had pulled her fine gold coach when she had been attacked by the robber gang and, sure enough, there on his back was the little robber girl. She had decided to end her wicked ways and was off to see the world.



Gerda wished her good luck with her new adventure and she and Kai continued on their way. Soon they reached the end of their long journey. It was summer in the big city and there was grandmother, just as she always was, and there were the roses blooming, just as they always did in the little garden up on the roof, but when Gerda and Kai sat once again on their chairs under the bower they found that they were no longer children. Time had passed and they had grown — and so, too, had their love.



HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

Hans Christian Andersen was born in Odense, Denmark on April 2nd, 1805. *The Snow Queen* is the most magical of all his tales. It was first published in 1844 and has earned a place as one of the greatest fairy stories ever written. It is the longest of Andersen's stories but was written in a remarkably short time, just 16 days from pen on paper to final publication. He later wrote that writing it was "sheer joy - it took hold of my mind in such a way that it came dancing out over the paper."

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